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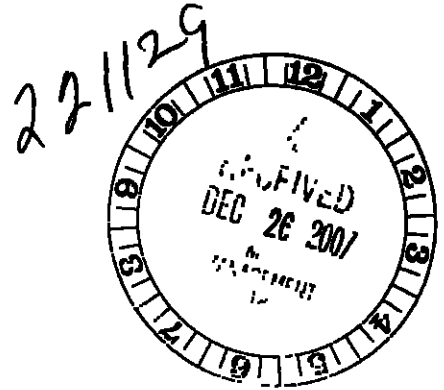
ILLINOIS STATE SENATE



WILLIAM E. PETERSON
STATE SENATOR • 26TH DISTRICT
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CAPITOL OFFICE

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December 18, 2007

Secretary Vernon Williams
U.S. Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

FD 35087

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Dear Secretary Williams:

I would like to take this opportunity to advise you that as the Illinois Senator from the 26th Senatorial District, I represent the citizens of Lake and northern Cook Counties. The Elgin, Joliet & Eastern (EJ&J) rail line currently operates in that area and northwestern Indiana with over 198 miles of track consisting primarily of an arc around Chicago extending from Waukegan, Illinois southward to Joliet and then in an easterly direction to Gary, Indiana.

My concern at this time is the application filed by the Canadian National Railroad (CN) seeking regulatory authorization to acquire the EJ&J Railroad Company (Docket #FD35087). The proposed acquisition does not promote the public interest because it will endanger public safety and increase both rail and motor vehicle traffic congestion. It seems that the primary purpose of the acquisition is to allow CN trains to bypass the bottleneck of rail congestion in Chicago's inner core by dispersing CN trains along the EJ&J arc on the periphery of the Chicago metropolitan area. It is my understanding that the EJ&J line currently provides rail service to approximately 100 customers, including steel mills, coal utilities, plastics and chemical producers, steel processors, distribution centers and scrap processors. Should the acquisition be approved, in addition to the trains that already use the line, the additional CN trains will cause an obvious increase in train traffic. Also, it is likely that CN will grant trackage rights to other railroads, thereby causing additional train traffic.

Because of motor vehicle traffic in the suburban area, railroad crossings are extremely dangerous. The EJ&J line crosses many of the region's major roadways (according to the Illinois Commerce Commission, there are 133 public highway-rail grade crossings on the EJ&J line) and a major increase in the number of trains using this line makes the situation ripe with the potential for disaster. Since the Chicago metropolitan region is usually rated among the worst locations in the nation when it comes to motor vehicle traffic congestion, increasing the number of trains on this line will simply aggravate the problem. In addition, it presents the possibility of drivers risking trying to "beat" oncoming trains at grade crossings. Also, the environmental

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impact of more traffic congestion, more gridlock, and more exhaust from vehicles will diminish regional air quality and increase the amount of gasoline wasted while these vehicles sit in traffic that does not move.

The proposal simply does not solve congestion but simply shifts the issue from Chicago's congestion to the suburbs. Let's work toward a well-reasoned, regional approach to solving the problem and not doing it piecemeal. The transportation benefit provided by the acquisition would clearly outweigh the safety, congestion, fuel waste and environmental concerns. These concerns must be considered by the Surface Transportation Board before making a decision on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William E. Peterson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William E. Peterson
Illinois State Senator
26th District

Copies: Senator Richard Durbin
Congresswoman Melissa Bean
Congressman Don Manzullo
Congressman Mark Kirk